

Spanish Ser and Estar

In Spanish, there are two verbs that mean “to be”: **ser** and **estar**. They are not interchangeable; we have to learn when to use each one.

Ser

Ser is used for qualities and characteristics, in the passive voice and in connection with adverbs of time. Here are some situations where we use ser:

- The hour, day, and date. For example: *Hoy es lunes. Son las tres de la tarde.* (Today is Monday. It is three in the afternoon.)
- Place of origin. For example: *Ella es de Colombia.* (She is from Colombia.)
- Occupation. For example: *Él es médico.* (He is a doctor.)
- Nationality. For example: *Nosotros somos mexicanos.* (We are Mexican.)
- Religious or political affiliation. For example: *Ellos son católicos.* (They are Catholic.)
- The material something is made of. For example: *La mesa es de madera.* (The table is made of wood.)
- Possession. For example: *Este libro es mío.* (This book is mine.)
- Relationship of one person to another. For example: *Ella es mi hermana.* (She is my sister.)
- Where an event is taking place. For example: *La fiesta es en mi casa.* (The party is at my house.)
- Essential qualities (what makes this thing, this thing?). For example: *El agua es líquida.* (Water is liquid.)

Estar

Estar is used for geographic or physical location, state or condition (like emotions), many idiomatic expressions, and progressive tenses (-ing). Here are some situations where we use estar:

- Geographic or physical location. For example: *Ellos están en el parque.* (They are in the park.)
- State or condition (like emotions). For example: *Yo estoy feliz.* (I am happy.)
- Many idiomatic expressions. For example: *Estoy de acuerdo.* (I agree.)
- Progressive tenses (-ing). For example: *Ella está estudiando.* (She is studying.)

Meaning Changes With Ser and Estar

There are some words that can be used with both ser and estar to form verb phrases, and these take on different meanings depending on the verb. Here are some examples of these types of phrases:

Some examples of these types of phrases:

Word	Ser + word	Estar + word
Aburrido	boring	bored
Bueno	good	well
Listo	smart	ready
Malo	bad	sick
Verde	green	unripe

For example:

El libro es aburrido. (The book is boring.)

Yo estoy aburrido. (I am bored.)

Ella es buena persona. (She is a good person.)

Ella está buena. (She is well.)

Él es listo. (He is smart.)

Él está listo. (He is ready.)

El perro es malo. (The dog is bad.)

El perro está malo. (The dog is sick.)

La manzana es verde. (The apple is green.)

La manzana está verde. (The apple is unripe.)